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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority theme: promoting full employment and decent work for all

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The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

In promoting full employment and decent work for all, it is crucial to focus on contributing factors that will achieve this theme. In developing people who are willing and able to work, it is becoming more important that people are properly enabled and empowered with an appropriate education.

Access to higher education

1. A formal education is essential to the development of people to ready them for work. However, many people are unable to fill many positions because of the lack of access to higher education.

2. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reads, "technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit."

3. Some employers may offer job-related training to employees or new employees, but this is the exception, not the norm. Technical and professional training through specialized programmes and institutions allows employees to acquire the skills needed to perform the necessary tasks of their position.

4. Although a formal education is necessary in an increasingly competitive environment with limited job opportunities, a formal education is not necessarily enough.

Non-formal education

5. While not forgetting the importance of a formal education, it is equally important to focus on the complementary effects of a non-formal education. Non-formal education allows people to enhance a formal education and encourages lifelong learning. Non-formal education is any organized educational activity outside the established formal system. This form of education empowers job-seekers with skills that employers are looking for. Youth movements are prime examples of effective means of a non-formal education.

6. Some of the key elements of non-formal education in developing people for full employment and decent work for all include:

(a) The appropriation of values;
(b) Personal development, including self-esteem and interpersonal relationships;
(c) Leadership formation;
(d) Critical thinking;
(e) Citizenship;
(f) Conflict resolution;
(g) Encountering and appreciating different cultures;

(h) Developing a global awareness and sense of solidarity;
(i) Participation in the community at the local, national, and global levels;
(j) Service to others;
(k) Empowerment of minorities and the marginalized.

While the list is not exhaustive, it contains elements that youth-led organizations around the world have identified as the benefits of a non-formal education in developing valuable members of any workforce.

7. The benefits of non-formal education in maximizing people's chances of employment include, but are not limited to, taking on a sense of real responsibility, taking initiatives and identifying creative solutions. In an ever increasingly competitive environment, youth-led organizations have been at the forefront of the enhancement of such skills, empowering young people with learning opportunities to acquire adequate tools and competencies necessary for full employment and decent work.

Youth-led organizations

8. Youth have the best understanding of the realities of their own lives. Youth offers employers some of the most dynamic, creative and talented people in the workforce. However, youth continue to be the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in the labour market. Engaging youth in youth-led organizations will assist policymakers in the fight against unemployment and underemployment.

9. The exclusion of youth in policymaking processes creates social tension due to the sentiments of being ignored or overlooked. Engaging youth in employment policymaking as consultants and stakeholders can avoid interventions that are ineffective, unpopular and difficult to implement.

10. Recognizing that youth provide an array of realities, it is critical that the United Nations and other inter-governmental agencies continue to engage youth organizations that have a multiplier effect. Such youth-led organizations are accountable to both themselves and their peers, resulting in a more representative voice in creating policies that promote full employment and decent work. Youth-led organizations, such as those of the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations, which is an informal network of over 30 membership-based international, regional and national youth platforms, have been at the forefront in discussing issues of employment and have taken the initiative to coordinate among themselves for greater cooperation and efficiency.

Inter-agency coordination

11. In the past few years, there has been an increased interest to involve youth-led organizations on the part of various intergovernmental bodies. While it is encouraging to see that youth are increasingly seen as an important stakeholder in the discussion of employment,

there is a major lack of coordination between the inter-governmental agencies with which youth-led organizations are involved.

12. As a result, youth-led organizations have observed the inefficiency of many inter-governmental organizations. The duplication of work is immense and is a hindrance to progress. Greater efforts for inter- and intra-agency coordination is an absolute must in order for the question of decent work and full employment to be properly answered.

13. Recommendations:

(a) Increase the access to higher education;
(b) Increase the promotion of non-formal education;
(c) Increase the engagement of youth-led organizations;
(d) Increase the coordination of inter-governmental organizations.